

19th District Session Review

To the citizens of the
19th Legislative District



Senator

**Mark
Doumit**

104 Mod1 Building
PO Box 40419
Olympia, WA 98504-0419
(360) 786-7636
Email: doumit.mark@leg.wa.gov



Representative

**Dean
Takko**

421 John L. O'Brien Building
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
(360) 786-7806
Email: takko.dean@leg.wa.gov



Representative

**Brian
Blake**

339 John L. O'Brien Building
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
(360) 786-7870
Email: blake.brian@leg.wa.gov

Friends and Neighbors,

April 2006

We wrapped up the 2006 legislative session a day ahead of schedule a few weeks ago in Olympia. Although it was only supposed to be a 60-day session, we accomplished a great deal for people in our 19th District, and for our fellow citizens all across Washington.

The long highlight list includes measures aimed at:

- Axing the \$5-a-day parking fee at our state parks.
- Providing tax cuts to retain local timber jobs and keep our state's timber industry competitive in the world market.
- Providing tax cuts to stimulate local agriculture, and providing incentives to jump-start our alternative-energy industry.
- Establishing tougher sentencing for sex offenders, and establishing new anti-meth tools for local governments.
- Enacting major progress in water policy.
- Overhauling the unemployment-insurance system.
- Reaching a landmark medical-malpractice compromise, and guaranteeing health care for more children and other citizens in need.

Inside our report today, you'll find more details about what the 2006 session means for you and your family. Please don't hesitate to contact our offices whenever you want to share your thoughts on legislative issues, or you have a question about some other part of state government.

It continues to be a true honor to represent the communities and neighborhoods of our 19th Legislative District. Please stay in touch!

Mark Doumit

Brian Blake

Dean Takko



Opportunity and responsibility:

At the beginning of the year, we set two goals:

- Forward progress.
- Good government stewardship.

We wanted to maintain the momentum from last year's historic legislative session. And we wanted to set aside enough money to keep our state in good shape over the long term. We believe that we've met both goals.

Since the Legislature wrote the two-year operating budget in 2005, our state coffers have collected \$1.6 billion in higher-than-expected revenues. The big budget debate during this year's session revolved around what should be done with the unbudgeted dollars.

We were proud to support a fiscally and morally responsible budget that invests in our families and our future. What does "morally and fiscally responsible" mean? To us, it means doing the right thing by supporting needed programs now — K-12 education, higher education, health care, human services, public safety, economic development, and natural resources — in order to avoid paying much higher costs later.

But we also lock up a prudent reserve — more than \$940 million — to pay bills that aren't due yet, but that we can already see coming.



In education, our achievements this year include:



- Helping students meet the rigorous academic standards of the WASL.
- Funding a half-percent pay raise for K-12 employees.
- Restoring levy-equalization funds a year ahead of schedule.
- Providing help for students who are falling behind in math.
- Creating a cabinet-level Early Learning Department.
- Enhancing the school-breakfast program.

In higher education, our achievements include:

- Providing nearly 500 new seats in our colleges and universities.
- Establishing new work-force education opportunity grants.
- Offering more work-force apprenticeships and other training avenues.

In health care, our achievements include:

- Approving landmark medical-malpractice reforms that:
 - Strengthen patient safety.
 - Make medical-malpractice insurance more affordable.
 - Streamline our legal system.

- Bolstering our mental-health treatment system.
- Funding Medicare "Part D" prescription-drug co-pays.
- Providing insurance for 6,500 more citizens in the Basic Health Plan.
- Covering 10,000 more immigrant kids in the Children's Health Program.
- Increasing funds for nursing homes.
- Establishing support for pandemic-influenza response plans.
- Setting parity for home-care agency workers.
- Fully repealing the nursing home bed-tax, saving seniors more than \$30 million over the next four years.
- Helping small businesses offer affordable health insurance.



In human services, our achievements include:

- Reforming the WorkFirst program.
- Strengthening the Washington Housing Trust Fund for low-income housing.
- Providing home-heating assistance for 14,000 additional low-income families.

Working for the present and planning for the long term aren't mutually exclusive objectives

For veterans, our achievements include:

- Creating a Veterans Innovations Program to provide additional assistance to veterans who have returned to their families and communities after serving in recent military action.



- Assistance for returning Iraq and Afghanistan military personnel in applying for benefits and services.
- Study of military personnel exposed to depleted uranium in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Funding for clothing, tools, and transportation to help veterans to participate in the Veterans Conservation Corps.
- An additional 40 beds at the Veterans' Home in Retsil.

In community protection, our achievements include:

- Comprehensive reform in sex-offender laws and policies to:
 - Impose mandatory minimum sentences of 25 years for violent and predatory sex offenses against children.
 - Improve community notification.
 - Strengthen registration and monitoring of known sex offenders.
 - Fund 500 new prison beds at Coyote Ridge Corrections Center.

- New tools in the battle against meth, including:
 - Tougher penalties.
 - More treatment.
 - Regional drug-enforcement teams that will mean new deputies, prosecutors and support staff for rural areas, including our own Southwest Washington communities.
- Make improvements at the Echo Glen juvenile rehabilitation facility.
- Send additional funding to the Vancouver crime lab.
- Make more money available for emergency management and preparedness.

In economic development, our achievements include:

- Providing better benefits to workers who are between jobs — without increasing taxes on business — by changing the unemployment-insurance system from four-quarter averaging to two-quarter averaging:
 - More than 30 other states are now using a two-quarter averaging system. We need this adjustment in the system so that construction workers and other working people are treated fairly. This decision made in the 2006 session will help prevent our neighbors and fellow citizens from falling through the cracks.
- Authorizing significant incentives to jump-start our state's alternative energy industry, which includes a new biomass turbine at the Grays Harbor paper mill in Hoquiam.
- Granting \$56 million in targeted tax cuts this year alone, including:



- \$5.8 million in B&O tax cuts for the timber industry.
- \$5.8 million in B&O tax cuts for replacement parts for farm equipment.
- \$3.9 million sales and use tax cut for diesel fuel used on farms.
- \$1 million in B&O tax cuts for new seed-conditioning facilities.

In natural resources, our achievements include:

- Reaching an historic water-management compromise to improve water use and conservation in the Columbia River basin.
- Funding toxic clean-up efforts around our state.
- Providing Hood Canal and Puget Sound clean-up efforts.
- Eliminating the \$5 day-use fee at state parks.



Funds we set aside for the next biennium include:

- A new Pension Funding Stabilization Account to make sure we meet our state-pension obligations — \$350 million.
- The Student Achievement Fund to help make sure our young people are prepared to meet the challenges of the new century — \$275 million.
- The Health Services Account to pay for health-care costs for disadvantaged Washington families — \$200 million.
- Ending-fund balance — \$221 million.
- We spend \$57 million from the Health Services Account and \$48 million from the Pension Stabilization Account in this biennium.
- This leaves us with total reserve funds establishing a strong foundation for the next biennium — \$941 million.

This is an unprecedented savings plan in our state's budgeting process. In a session full of breakthroughs, this

budget temperance is very likely the most important groundwork we laid in the 2006 session.

Coastal Caucus report:

Legislators from our coastal counties continue working together in a bipartisan fashion to craft state policies that support our local families, businesses and communities. Our 2006 accomplishments include:

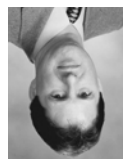
- \$10 million for repairs to slide damage on Highway 101, Highway 105, Highway 107 and Highway 4.
- \$950,000 for high-tech tsunami warning sirens.
- \$500,000 to study methods for relieving the traffic congestion in Aberdeen's downtown core.
- \$75,000 for small ports dredging.
- \$50,000 to attack the spartina-weed infestation in Grays Harbor.

Our Coastal Caucus also led support for new state policies that will:

- Stabilize our crab fishery, including a bill to limit the size of vessels that can be used in the fishery.
- Provide Clallam and Cowlitz counties with one additional superior court judge each.
- Make sure that any raw milk sold to the public is obtained in a safe, clean environment.

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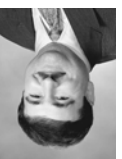
Brian Blake
Representative
339 John L. O'Brien Building
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600



Dean Takko
Representative
421 John L. O'Brien Building
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600



Mark Doumit
Senator
104 Modt Building
PO Box 40419
Olympia, WA 98504-0419



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